

ETHICS GUIDE

**FOR
SPIRITUAL
HELPERS &
COMMUNITIES**

**EDITED BY
AMY SKEZAS**

What do we intend when we relate to each other?

—Sheila Ryan, *Vital Practice: Stories from the Healing Arts: The Homeopathic and Supervisory Way* (Portland, England: Sea Change, 2004), p. 7

No matter how experienced you are . . . we all share in the common need . . . to look at why we are in the work and how we get appropriate support for ourselves.

— Peter Hawkins and Robin Shohet, *Supervision in the Helping Professions*, 3d ed. (New York: Open University Press, 2006), pp. 5-7

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I. ETHICS CODE
REV. THOMAS AYERS M.DIV. ED.D.
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I-1. Our Position of Trust & Accountability as Spiritual Helpers

In our work as spiritual helpers, drawing upon higher consciousness, people come to us for spiritual healing, counseling, learning, and direction. Our work as facilitators of spiritual growth and development is a sacred endeavor that encompasses the entire spectrum of human life and experience—including ethics. We pay attention to, and choose to nurture, our healthful, respectful, sustainable relations, with clients, colleagues, and others.¹ And, although often our focus is on our individual work, whether we are thinking about it or not, we are also part of a spiritual community. Our choices affect and reflect upon one another, in our more immediate geographic or cultural sub-community, and in the larger world community of spiritual transformational work.²

II-2. Principles of Ethical Helping Relationship

- A. We base our helping work and relationships in **authentic caring** about and regard for others.
- B. Those who come to us for service **entrust** themselves to our care.
- C. We **accept and honor** this trust.
- D. This covenant of trust, also known as a fiduciary relationship, calls for us to be **accountable** to a high standard of **professional behavior**.
- E. Our fiduciary accountability applies **whether or not we are paid** for our work.
- F. We **tend to the welfare** of those who seek, or to whom we offer, our services.
- G. We are **willing to examine** our own motivations and actively to reflect upon and cultivate curiosity about what we may not yet have been able to discern and accept in ourselves.
- H. We are willing to **tell the truth without blame or judgment**.
- I. We are willing to **ask for help** (consultation and supervision) and to learn and grow.

¹ *The Lord our God is one Lord. And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul and with all thy strength; this is the first commandment. And the second is like—namely this: thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these.*

See *Gospel of Mark* [12:29-31], *Deuteronomy* [6:4-5] and *Leviticus* [19:18]. The first verse is common to many of humanity's religions—including Hinduism, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam—as well as the guiding principle for many people who consider themselves spiritual, but not religious. They may not use the word 'God' to describe it, but all spiritual workers are in touch with some higher consciousness—greater than the human ego, that connects us all—and draw upon it for transformation and sustenance. Delving into the personal meaning of the second two verses—again, whether or not we subscribe to the Judeo-Christian Bible—functionally is part of the relational work of spiritual helpers in many areas (ethics, supervision, mediation, etc.).

² By engaging with these matters and reflecting upon our vulnerabilities, we:

- Increase our self-knowledge, self-awareness, and empowerment for ourselves and others
- Increase our non-judgment and compassion for ourselves and others
- Build more capacity for trust and openness in our selves and our communities: acknowledging these things brings them out of shame and into healing
- Increase our skills in our chosen fields of service
- Increase our skills to make more ethical choices and help others to do so as well
- Perceive choices and situations that can create legal or public relations problems for ourselves or our communities, and choose another way

II-3. Standards of Ethical Professional Behavior

A. The Seven Chakras

Our standards of ethical professional behavior are keyed to the seven vital energy centers known as the chakras.³

1. Wealth

We maintain clear and honest business practices, including agreements regarding meeting times and fees (see pp. 12 – 13). We take care not to create situations where financial or material self-interest conflicts with our fiduciary responsibilities; if we become aware of such a situation, we disclose it to those whom we serve, or refer them to other spiritual helpers.

2. Intimacy

A. We agree that beginning a sexual or romantic relationship is never appropriate between those actively involved as teachers and students, healers and clients, counselors and clients, ministers and congregants, spiritual leaders and community members, or any spiritual helper and those whom the helper serves in a fiduciary relationship.

B. We agree that if such a situation arises, we will be patient and take particular care to follow our organization's parameters of practice relating to questions of intimacy (see pp. 7 - 9).

3. Freedom

We respect the emotional, physical, mental, and spiritual autonomy of those whom we serve. Barring an emergency situation in which the person is incapacitated (see pp. 22 - 27), we consider that the person who comes for our care is the best and final authority on his or her own welfare. We seek at all times to further that understanding; at no time do we endeavor to fulfill that function ourselves.

4. Authentic Caring

We choose to be compassionate with ourselves and with others. We acknowledge our tendency to care more easily for those whom we perceive as being like us, and we take steps to practice opening our hearts more widely. We recognize that competition, mistrust, blame, judgment, playing the victim, playing the hero, and trying to rescue others can destroy the spirit of authentic caring that is the heart of human association.

5. Truth

We agree to speak that which is true and useful, to cultivate conscious and clear communication, and to cultivate the quality of loving-kindness and honesty as the basis of our speech. We refrain from gossip and the spreading of rumors, and hateful speech (see pp. 14 – 15).

³ Kylea Taylor, *The Ethics of Caring: Honoring the Web of Life in Our Professional Healing Relationships* (Santa Cruz, California: Hanford Mead Publishers, 1995). Material from this book is used here with permission of the publisher.

6. Insight

We believe that the non-ordinary states of consciousness—prayer, meditation, expanded psychic states, etc.—can mobilize intrinsic healing forces in the physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual bodies. Through these forces we, and those whom we serve, may experience transcendent insights and wisdom, which we respect.

7. Metaphysical Union

We acknowledge the deep longings, within ourselves and within those whom we serve, to wake up to our identity with greater consciousness, the Source, God, Divine Flow, Great Mystery. We honor the Oneness experience with empathy, encouragement, and respect. We keep clear the difference between the inner, sacred metaphysical union, and any union of external, human relationship.

II-4. Vulnerabilities to Ethical Misconduct

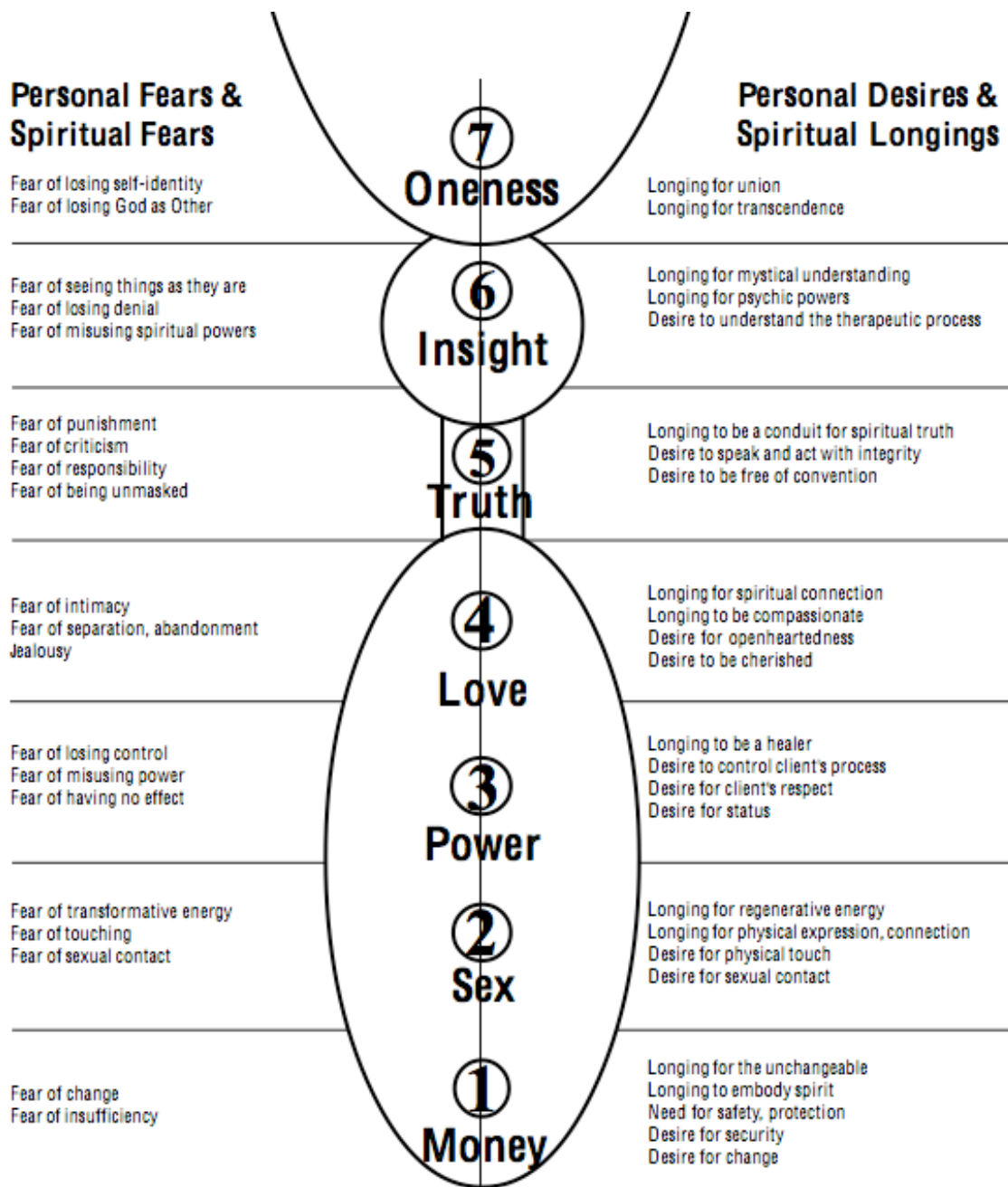
Our spiritual work often involves non-ordinary states of consciousness—prayer, meditation, expanded psychic awareness, etc. Along with strength, such states can bring increased vulnerability, both for us and for those whom we serve; for example:

- Intensification of unexamined personal issues and longings
- Isolation and overconfidence in our perceptions because of our higher sense perception
- Ignorance or denial of the pitfalls associated with our helping work, especially because of our attraction to and desire to focus on the light, which may lead to our neglect in befriending the shadow
- Disregard for others—losing connection with authentic caring; the devolution of the “I-Thou” relationship to the “I-it” relationship⁴
- Caregiver burnout, and the descent into burnout, in which we are often unaware of how compromised we are, and are missing the signals to slow down and take care of ourselves

We accept that however good, skilled, or well intentioned we are, we are vulnerable in these ways, and we accept the responsibility to pay attention to our vulnerabilities.

Formal supervision with a trained supervisor helps us become more aware of our own less-than-conscious motivations and needs and helps us move into finer levels of clarity, accountability, and personal and organizational healing and effectiveness.

⁴ The “I-Thou” relationship is a key part of philosopher Martin Buber’s description of how personal dialogue can define the nature of reality. “Buber’s main proposition is that we may address **existence** in two ways: that of the “I” towards an “It”, towards an object that is separate in itself, which we either use or experience; and that of the “I” towards “Thou”, in which we move into existence in a relationship without bounds. . . [H]uman life finds its meaningfulness in relationships. All of our relationships, Buber contends, bring us ultimately into relationship with **God**, who is the Eternal Thou. A person sitting next to a complete stranger on a park bench may enter into an “I-Thou” relationship with the stranger merely by beginning to think positively about people in general. The stranger is a person as well, and gets instantaneously drawn into a mental or spiritual relationship with the person whose positive thoughts necessarily include the stranger as a member of the set of persons about whom positive thoughts are directed. It is not necessary for the stranger to have any idea that he is being drawn into an “I-Thou” relationship for such a relationship to arise.” http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/I_and_Thou



Caregiver Vulnerabilities to Ethical Misconduct

Copyright © 1994, 1995, 2001, 2003 by Kylea Taylor. All Rights Reserved.
 The Ethics of Caring: Honoring the Web of Life in our Professional Healing Relationships (\$20.95)
 Hanford Mead Publishers, Inc., PO Box 8051, Santa Cruz, CA 95061 / (831) 459-6855 /
www.hanfordmead.com
 Please do not duplicate this chart without written permission of the publisher.

II-5. Parameters of Ethical Professional Practice

A. We Take Care

We take care to ensure that in our practice we stay within these parameters.

B. Parameters

1. Scope of Practice

We make it our business to learn and understand the appropriate scope of practice associated with our position, and stay within it.

2. Fitness for Service

We make referrals, and refrain from initiating or continuing work with someone, when our fitness for doing the work ethically or effectively is compromised in any way.

3. Setting

We take care to ensure an appropriate setting in our practice to protect those whom we serve and ourselves from actual or imputed harm, and to protect the community and the profession from censure.

4. Confidentiality

Generally, we refrain from discussing confidential information with anyone who does not have a legitimate need to know the information, including but not limited to the following situations:

a. Work with Clients, Students, Etc.

We hold as confidential the personal and private information that is confided to us in the course of our work as spiritual helpers, including but not limited to security of client records and names, with three exceptions:

i. Prevent Harm

We ensure that those whom we serve understand that we may not keep confidential information that may result in harm to them or others, and that we will notify the appropriate authorities in such a case.

ii. Shared in Supervision

We inform those whom we serve that confidential information may be shared with our supervisors as part of our professional development, and with the purpose of ensuring the highest quality of care. We note that this information does not include personal identification of clients/congregants/students/etc., but relates to the nature of the issues being worked on, and their impact on us as spiritual helpers.

iii. Permission to Disclose

We gain written permission to make a disclosure, and we disclose information in accordance with the limitations of the permission granted.

b. Information Entrusted to Us by an Organization or Institution

Except as properly authorized by the institution, we maintain confidentiality of:

- i. Proprietary information
- ii. Personal and personnel-related information

- iii. Information entrusted to us that is otherwise not readily available to the public

5. Intimacy

a. No Intimation

We refrain from any intimation that a present or future romantic or sexual relationship is possible during retreats, formal teachings, healing sessions, counseling sessions, sacerdotal functions, community gatherings, or any activities associated with our role as metaphysical helpers.

b. If It Arises

If the possibility of a genuine and committed relationship interest develops over time between a spiritual helper, and a person served by the helper, then before allowing any romantic or sexual relationship to develop, the helper initiates a process to change the basis of the relationship from a fiduciary relationship to a peer-to-peer relationship. Such a change should be approached as an exploration, with restraint and sensitivity, and with the understanding that it may not be possible to make the change in every case.

c. To Initiate the Change

To initiate the change, the following steps are followed:

- i. The fiduciary relationship is formally ended. The client/congregant/student/etc. must clearly be transferred to, and under the guidance and service of, another metaphysical helper or a therapist.
- ii. The original spiritual helper meets over a three-month “cooling off period” with one or two appropriate supervisors before allowing any romantic or sexual relationship to develop with the former client/congregant/student/etc. The three-month period begins at the end of the fiduciary relationship, i.e., starts no earlier than the last class, healing session, etc. This gives time for self-inquiry as to personal motivations, and about what the needs of the former client/congregant/student/ etc. might be. It is too much to expect that someone in love can avoid rationalizing, if left only to internal dialogue, why he or she should have a relationship.
- iii. If after the three months and after considering consequences, both parties want to continue to explore the romantic or sexual relationship, they proceed with a clear understanding that the fiduciary relationship has ended and with a conscious commitment to proceed with authentic caring for one another and all concerned.

C. Examples

The following examples are meant to illustrate the parameters of practice, and are not meant as an all-inclusive list:

1. Scope of Practice

Examples of circumstances in which we exceed our proper scope of practice include but are not limited to:

- a. A spiritual healer tells a client, "You have cancer and I can cure you"
- b. A spiritual healer tells a client, "You do not have cancer"
- c. A spiritual healer tells a client not to take medication prescribed by a medical professional
- d. A spiritual counselor tells a client that the counselor has a special gift that allows him to do something for the client that no one else, anywhere, can do and that the client can only receive the benefit she needs by working with that counselor
- e. A metaphysical minister knowingly gives final rites on the deathbed of a Catholic who no longer can speak who, when well, believed that only a Catholic priest could grant extreme unction

2. Fitness for Service

Examples of circumstances in which we should make a referral include but are not limited to those times we are experiencing:

- a. Physical illness or incapacity, such as a contagious disease or loss of speaking voice
- b. Mental impairment, such as Alzheimer's disease (This determination may be made by someone else, as the helper may be beyond the ability to recognize his or her condition)
- c. Emotional incapacity, such as that caused by an intense shock or intense grief
- d. Financial conflict of interest, such as having a dual relationship with the person we serve that could lead us to have a personal interest that clouds our professional judgment, such as:
 - i. We want to borrow money from a client
 - ii. We make a loan to a student and wonder about when and if it will be repaid
 - iii. We want a congregant to invest in a business in which we have an interest
 - iv. We need to "make a good impression" and not do anything to jeopardize some business opportunity in which the client has some influence

3. Appropriate Setting

Examples of inappropriate setting include but are not limited to:

- a. Doing a healing session in which we are alone with the client and the client is not fully clothed
- b. Working in a place or manner in which our professional conversations are easily overheard and confidentiality is breached or threatened
- c. Meeting alone with a student in a retreat setting, in the student's bedroom, with the door closed

4. Confidentiality

Examples of inappropriate treatment of confidential information include but are not limited to:

- a. Gossiping
- b. Mentioning detailed case information to someone other than your supervisor, outside of the bounds of a formal supervision session
- c. Leaving confidential files where someone walking by could see them
- d. Not taking appropriate steps to keep confidential information in a secure place, for example, having your “file sharing” preferences on a laptop set to “share” when you are in a public place with wireless internet and your internet connection is on
- e. Not securing client credit card numbers and other financial information to which you have access as a result of your professional work
- f. Revealing beyond the scope of permission granted— for example, the client gives permission to you to talk with her husband about her deep fear of death, and in the course of your conversation with the husband you reveal that the client has been having numerous affairs behind the husband’s back
- g. Sharing a spiritual growth organization’s confidential mailing list with a friend, for her to promote her new vitamin company, because you think people interested in spiritual growth are probably interested in self-help with nutrition and you want to help your friend’s business get started
- h. Giving a friend access to a password-protected online course because you think they’d like it, even though they did not pay tuition and even though the people in the course think that their online discussions are private only to the people enrolled in the course and committed to the process, and whose identities are known to each other

5. Intimacy

Examples of inappropriate behavior about intimacy include but are not limited to:

- a. Flirting with a client
- b. Touching the client in a suggestive way
- c. Dressing in a suggestive way for a session (low neckline for women, tight pants for either gender, etc.)
- d. Arranging to have dinner with a client in a romantic restaurant
- e. Speaking in any way that implies a special, personal relationship of intimacy instead of a professional relationship of spiritual support
- f. Telling the client that by having an intimate relationship with you, he or she will be blessed and have some spiritual advancement

D. If You Are On the Line

In these and other kinds of sensitive situations, remember to slow down and proceed with caution if you are in doubt about what to do. Wait to act until you've received some kind of appropriate help, such as a session with a trained supervisor. Ask yourself:

1. **Secrecy:** Am I willing for my actions to be known publicly?
2. **Shame:** Is there anything I am doing or thinking about doing of which I am ashamed?
3. **Other Warning Signals:** Is there some part of me that is uneasy about what I want to do, even if I can't articulate why?
4. **Context:** Who might be harmed by this action I am thinking of taking, or have taken?

II. POLICIES
WALTER STRECKER B.S.
MELISSA SQUIRE J.D.
AMY SKEZAS J.D. D.D.

II-1. Business Conduct

A. Professional Integrity in Business Dealings

1. Conduct all business dealings and relationships with integrity, honesty, and respect for others.
2. Business relationships are to be based on fair dealing, honesty, and integrity; fairness in quality, price, and service; and compliance with applicable laws and regulations.

B. Accurate & Complete Accounting for Funds

1. All transactions must be lawful.
2. Transactions concerning accounts should be clearly authorized and properly and promptly recorded.
3. No unrecorded fund, reserve, asset, or special account shall be set up or maintained for any purpose.
4. No false or fictitious entries shall be made in books, records, accounts, or in communications for any reason.
5. No payment or transfer of funds or assets shall be made for any purpose other than that described by the supporting documents, and specifically as authorized by management or the Board of Directors.
6. You are responsible for accurate and timely recordkeeping for all your transactions.
7. All books, records, and documents must accurately and completely describe the transactions they represent.

C. Bribes, Kickbacks, Misappropriation of Funds

1. Do not permit, condone, or use any outside agent to accomplish bribes, kickbacks, or any other illegal, secret, or improper payments, transfers, or receipts. This prohibition applies both to the giving and the receiving of payments or gifts in excess of nominal value, not related to the customary public gift giving such as birthdays, weddings, etc. that may be part of life in a spiritual community.
2. Do not offer, give, or transfer any money or anything else of value for the personal benefit of any employee or agent of another business entity for the purpose of:
 - i. Obtaining or retaining any business that the business entity itself would not otherwise provide
 - ii. Receiving any kind of favored treatment that the business entity itself would not otherwise provide
 - iii. Inducing or assisting such employee or agent to violate any duty to his employer or to violate any law
3. Do not assist in the misuse of organizational funds, including, without limitation, the misappropriation of such funds for personal benefit.
4. Fees, commissions, and expenses paid to outside agents must be based upon proper billings, accurate recordkeeping, and reasonable standards for services rendered.

D. Conflicts of Interest & Organizational Business

Do not use your position with, or information acquired during your work with, the organization, in a manner that may create a conflict, or the appearance of a conflict, between your personal interests and those of the organization.

E. Political & Charitable Contributions

You may not religious non-profit organizational funds or assets to any political candidates, party, charity, or similar organizations, unless such contribution is expressly permitted by law and has been pre-approved by the appropriate, authorized management.

II-2. Illegal Drugs & Alcohol

The following policy is implemented to help ensure and maintain a drug-free, healthful, safe, and secure working and learning environment. The policy applies to any organizational gathering or function, and to any environment you are creating or supporting as part of your work under or within the organization.

Violations of this policy will result in disciplinary action, which, at the investigating officer's discretion and depending upon the seriousness of the violation, may include, but not be limited to, required participation and successful completion in a rehabilitation program.

A. Usage

The use, purchase, possession, distribution, sale, manufacture, or offering of illegal drugs, alcohol, or drug paraphernalia on the organization's premises, at an organization educational or worship function or gathering, while on the job, while performing or participating in organization-related worship, business, or learning events is absolutely prohibited. Reporting to work, class, or an organization-related worship, business, or learning function, conference, or gathering under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs is likewise prohibited.

B. Definitions Under This Policy

1. The definition of "alcohol" includes any intoxicating beverage, including beer, wine, liquor, whiskey, vodka, gin, or other fermented or distilled beverage. This list is not intended to be all-inclusive.
2. The terms "illegal drug" and "drug" refer to controlled substances defined as such under the federal Controlled Substance Act at 21 USC section 802. The term "illegal drug" also includes a prescribed drug not legally obtained, a prescribed drug possessed or used by someone other than the person for whom it was prescribed, and any prescribed drug used for other than its prescribed purpose.
3. The term "drug paraphernalia" includes, but is not limited to, any unauthorized material or equipment or item used or designed for use in testing, packaging, storing, injecting, ingesting, inhaling, or otherwise introducing into the human body a controlled substance.

II-3. Discriminatory Harassment

A. Protected Characteristics

The community is committed to ensuring an environment which respects the dignity and worth of each individual and which is free from all forms of unlawful discrimination, including sexual harassment and harassment because of race, color, religion, gender, national origin, ancestry, age, disability, status as a veteran, sexual orientation, or any other characteristic prohibited by law.

B. Prohibited Conduct

The community will not tolerate verbal or physical conduct that harasses, disrupts, or interferes with another's work or learning or which creates an intimidating, offensive, or hostile work environment based on a protected characteristic.

Examples of such harassment include but are not limited to:

1. A person in a position of authority or trust who threatens, suggests, or implies that your protected characteristic will adversely affect any condition of study or employment or career development in the organization
2. A person in a position of authority or trust suggests or implies that acquiescence to sexual advances may favorably affect any condition of study or employment or career development in the organization, or threatens to take adverse action if sexual favors are not granted
3. Unwelcome flirtations propositions, advances, physical contact, whistling, leering, improper gestures, or offensive remarks, including unwelcome comments about appearance
4. Using epithets, slurs, negative stereotypes, or engaging in hostile acts that relate to a protected characteristic, including purported jokes or pranks

C. Equal Access

It is the community policy, while reserving lawful rights where appropriate to take actions designed to promote the principles of the organization, to offer equal access to educational and employment opportunities for all without regard to race, color, religion, gender, national origin, ancestry, age, disability, status as a veteran, sexual orientation, or any other characteristic prohibited by law not related to someone's ability to perform the tasks associated with the position.

Any applicant for admission, contractual relations or employment, and all students, faculty members, and employees, are welcome to raise any questions regarding this policy with an appropriate officer or any member of the Board of Directors.

D. Proactive Steps to Promote Equal Access & Prevent Harassment

We recommend that you follow the steps below in your relationships and business dealings in the community, to proactively promote equal access, and to prevent harassment. The steps are recommendations from www.nolo.com, an excellent legal self-help web site, to which we refer you if you want further information about equal access and discriminatory harassment.

1. Respect

Treat your co-workers and fellow community members with respect. People who are deprived of dignity or humiliated may be hurt in ways that do not support our shared purposes, and are more likely in some way to seek revenge. Beyond these practical concerns, the spiritual reality of Oneness teaches that you diminish yourself when you diminish someone else.

2. Openness

Adopt an open-door communication policy and put it into practice, with conscious attention to listening. This will help you find out about problems early on, when you can nip them in the bud. And it will show your co-workers and fellow community members that you value their opinions, an important component of positive relations.

3. Consistency

Apply the same standards of performance and conduct to all the people whom you evaluate or who depend upon you for fair treatment. People quickly sour on someone who plays favorites or punishes scapegoats.

4. Feedback

Give regular, written evaluations as called for in your position. Performance evaluations are an opportunity for better communication and more satisfaction in the long run, even if the news is sometimes challenging when it first comes to your attention or the attention of someone else.

5. Purpose

Make functional, job-related, purpose-related decisions. Every decision should be guided by functional criteria, not by factors such as someone's race, gender, national origin, sexual orientation, or your personal biases. Make sure that your decisions are related to the purpose and business you share, and make sense from that perspective.

III. CONCERN & COMPLAINT PROCEDURES

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III-1. Investigation of Concerns & Complaints

If a complaint is made regarding the matters discussed in this *Ethics Guide*, management of the organization will appoint an investigating officer to examine the situation and take appropriate action. Anyone charged with investigating a complaint in the community shall follow these steps, as suggested at www.nolo.com:

1. Decide whether to investigate
2. Take immediate action if necessary
3. Choose an investigator
4. Plan the investigation
5. Conduct interviews
6. Gather documents and other evidence
7. Evaluate the findings
8. Take action
9. Document the investigation
10. Follow up

When a report is made, the investigating officer(s) will undertake as prompt an investigation as may be appropriate under all of the circumstances. The steps to be taken during the investigation cannot be fixed in advance, but will vary depending upon the nature of the allegations. During an investigation, all involved persons are expected to cooperate and provide truthful information. Confidentiality will be maintained throughout the investigatory process to the extent practical and consistent with the organization's need to undertake a full investigation. The investigation shall remain as confidential as practicable and those conducting the investigation shall respect the privacy of all persons involved. No adverse action by the organization shall be taken against anyone for communicating legitimate concerns to the appropriate persons.

III-2. Informal Responses

There may be instances in which an individual reporting a concern or complaint seeks only to discuss the matter informally and does not wish the organization to undertake an investigation or take further steps. Management encourages such informal discussions and will attempt to honor the wishes of the concerned individual. In such situations, the organization may arrange for mediation or some other informal mechanism for resolving the issues. However, any individual reporting a concern or complaint should be aware that the investigating officer might decide that it is appropriate to take action to address the concern, beyond informal matters. Response to any allegations is at the discretion of the investigating officers, and depends upon the seriousness of the circumstances.

III-3. Disciplinary Action

A. When Disciplinary Action May Be Taken

An allegation of violation of any parameter of practice (Section II-5: Scope of Practice, Fitness for Service, Appropriate Setting, Confidentiality, Intimacy) or any policy (Section III: Business Conduct, Illegal Drugs & Alcohol, Discriminatory Harassment) is automatically deemed a serious matter and grounds for an inquiry, and potential cause for disciplinary action. An allegation of violation of provisions of

Ethics Guide other than those listed in the previous sentence will be examined to determine if there are grounds for inquiry and cause for disciplinary action.

B. What Disciplinary Action May Entail

Disciplinary action may include, but is not limited to, defrocking of clergy, dis-enrollment of students or members, termination of contractual relations with independent contractors, dismissal of employees, and other serious consequences. Depending on the circumstances, appropriate law enforcement agencies may be notified. Upon completion of the investigation, the outcome will be communicated to the person(s) filing the complaint upon which the inquiry was based.

III-4. Filing a Concern or Complaint

A. Phone First:

Call the office and leave a phone message with the administrative assistant, or in the organization's voice mailbox, alerting the administration that you are filing a concern or complaint.

B. Subject Matter

After you call, please write a description of what is happening, using the form. Report to the administration your complaint/concern about any event or situation that you believe involves discriminatory **harassment; any breach of Ethics Code**; or any other matter that is **serious** and that you believe **affects the well being of the community**.

C. Delivery

Email, fax, or snail mail the completed form to the organization's administrative offices.

CONCERN/COMPLAINT FORM

Name

Date

Please describe in detail the event or situation you wish to report

Please describe your concerns about the incident(s)

Please describe any action you have taken regarding your concerns

Contact phone number where you can be reached directly or by voice message

Your current email address

Signature _____

IV. AT RISK/EMERGENCY
GUIDELINES & PROCEDURES
REV. NANCY REUBEN M.D. M.DIV.
REV. THOMAS AYERS M.DIV. ED.D.

IV-1. Introduction

These guidelines are intended for individuals who find themselves beyond their skill range when encountering at-risk and emergency situations in the course of their helping relationships. Such circumstances can be serious or potentially catastrophic. These guidelines are for the community, including but not limited to:

- Practitioners who work with individuals on a one-to-one basis
- Teachers and leaders of spiritual growth and development and
- People participating in peer-to-peer supervision relationships

At any time, community members or our clients, students, congregants, etc., may be witness to worries, anxieties, fears, insecurities, and on occasion, disclosures of intense, complicated, possibly dangerous emotions and impulses. Generally, the people with whom we interact are of sound body and mind. It is always possible, however, that someone with serious issues slips through the cracks, or that an otherwise well person experiences extreme distress because of some stress, emergency, illness, or other precipitating factor.

Community members can act with insight and responsibility even in the absence of a background in mental health. With these guidelines, we are not training people to become therapists, or to diagnose and treat mental and emotional conditions. Our intention is to assist community members in becoming aware of signs and symptoms of distressing conditions, so that they may be empowered, and may empower other people in their self-care process, offering suggestions and referrals when needed—and so they know when and how to intervene more actively in emergency situations.

Emergencies are usually unexpected. Because of this, community members are encouraged to note and to share their personal emergency contact information with the other people with whom they are working together closely, with instructions not to use these contacts except in cases of emergency. We also suggest that you gather emergency contact information as part of client intake. Keep it in a safe place, but have it easily accessible in case it is needed.

IV-2. Distinguish Emergency from Non-Emergency

These guidelines are designed to help you distinguish between two broad categories of situation:

A. Non-emergency

Acute or chronic issues that are of real concern, but are not immediately dangerous

B. Emergency

Situations that are severe, out of control and/or potentially dangerous

IV-3. Basic Steps

A. Pay attention

Pay attention to what you are feeling and sensing, that is, to what your instinct or sixth sense tell you about a situation.

B. Assess

Stay very calm and grounded and assess the situation.

C. Determine

Make a determination. Is this troubled person just “going through something” and is basically all right? Does the person need professional help? Is the person already receiving professional help? Is the person in immediate trouble?

D. Communicate

Address your concerns directly with the person. If you are worried, say so in a tactful but direct way, and offer guidance (for example, schedule a follow-up session, suggest getting additional, professional help, etc.). When people are in distress, or disclose a troubling issue, it is important to talk this through calmly with them so you can get an understanding of the situation, and so they feel listened to and heard. If the case is extreme and you need to make an emergency intervention let the person know how you are feeling and what you would like to do. The most notable exception is if someone is completely out of control and violent. Then don't talk, act: it is important to act immediately for everyone's safety: call the local police.

IV-4. Protocols

When someone is in serious trouble and/or immediate danger, he or she may not be able to take action on their own behalf. At this point it is important that you assume control of the situation. Whether you are in person or long distance, do not leave the person alone.

	Non-emergency	Emergency
Long Distance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Talk it out • Schedule a follow-up session • Suggest getting additional professional help 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emergency contacts &/or their local police or fire department • Make sure that someone is with the person, who could accompany them to the emergency room if necessary; talk them through getting someone while you are on the phone with them • If they are alone and are incapable of recruiting someone, keep them on the phone while you try to reach one of their emergency contacts via another line • If all else fails, call their local police or fire department and explain the crisis; give the person's address and their status
In Person	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Talk it out • Schedule a follow-up session • Suggest getting additional professional help 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emergency contacts &/or 911 • Keep the person with you while you call 911, or call an emergency contact to escort them to an emergency room

In an emergency, after you have handled the immediate situation and the person is under the care of an appropriate professional, notify the administration of the organization and describe what has happened.

IV-5. General Warning Signs

A. Dramatic Change

If someone has a **dramatic change in behavior, (suddenly, or within the past few weeks)**, pay careful attention. A severely angry or irritable posture may be the norm for some people while it is completely out of character for someone else.

B. Out of Control

If someone is personally **feeling out of control emotionally or mentally** or if **you feel** that the other person is out of control, this needs to be addressed immediately.

C. How Can I Tell?

Ask questions: Every one has ups and downs in their lives, and people may be appropriately sad or angry about relationships or career issues. If you get a sense that someone has serious problems and is having a difficult time coping (e.g. someone is extremely depressed and you are worried that they may be suicidal.), it is a good idea to ask them about it. Experience has shown that asking these types of questions does not cause suicidal ideation, nor do they cause people to act on their feelings if they would not otherwise do so. In fact, this type of inquiry will often result in people getting the help they need and possibly lead to saving lives.

In peer supervision triangles, if you sense that another member is in trouble, check with the third triangle member to get his or her perspective; if necessary, take the issue to the triangle's supervisor. If you sense that another member is overstepping appropriate boundaries, for example, trying to be a savior, rescuer or therapist to a third member who is in moderate to severe trouble, intervene and if necessary, take the issue to the triangle's supervisor.

In any session work: If you do not feel comfortable ending your session with someone because **you are worried** about leaving him in his current state of distress, ask him is there someone he can call to talk to or to be with. If he says no, suggest he call his emergency contact person(s). If he is unable to do this, or cannot assure you that he is safe (i.e., he is desperate or suicidal), ☎ activate the emergency protocols.

IV-6. At-Risk Situations That Need To Be Addressed Immediately

You may never encounter these kinds of situations but it is empowering for you to be informed about the possibility so that if a disturbance like this arises, you have a better chance of recognizing it for what it is, and acting appropriately. For example, warning signs of depression and suicide are distributed to middle and high school students, teachers, parents, college students, and talked about on television programs and commercials.

A. Severe Depression (Symptoms lasting more than 2 weeks)

Hopelessness about one's situation and future, morbid thoughts, giving away possessions, writing a will

Helplessness: Can't envision a way out of their situation, feel trapped, don't know what to do or who to call

Vegetative Symptoms: Self-care has plummeted

Not washing, not caring about body habitus

Not eating or barely eating

Not wanting to get out of bed

Sleeping most of the day

Sitting in the dark for long hours

Moving very slowly or tentatively

Not engaging in normal activities

Barely speaking, slow or slurred speech, tangential speech

Staring into space, not engaged in conversations or relationships

If you find these symptoms then ☞ activate emergency protocols.

B. Suicidal Feelings or Behaviors

If someone is extremely depressed and you are worried that the person may be suicidal or self-destructive, it is best to lay things out on the table by asking the following questions:

1. Are you thinking about hurting yourself or killing yourself?
2. Do you have a plan of how you would do it?
3. Are you safe today/tonight? Are you with anyone?
4. What are you doing for the rest of the day or evening?

If the answers to #1 or #2 are yes, or if they cannot assure you that they are safe then ☞ activate the emergency protocols.

C. Severe Manic Symptoms

Rapid, incoherent speech

Behaviors and/or thoughts that are out of control

Hasn't slept in a couple of days, has little fatigue and is "hyper"

If you find these symptoms then ☞ activate emergency protocols

D. Extreme Anger, Explosive Behavior

The person is out of control and can't settle down, and you feel endangered (bullied, threatened or about to be attacked) then 🚒 take action for your own safety first (for example, place physical distance between you and the person) and then to secure the safety of the other person; then 🚒 activate emergency protocols.

E. Intent to Kill or Do Grievous Physical Harm

If someone discloses to you that he intends to kill or to do grievous physical harm to another person then 🚒 contact the local police immediately.

IV-7. Other Situations

A. Special Circumstances: Non-Ordinary States of Consciousness:

When working with people who are in altered states of consciousness, it is sometimes difficult to know if bizarre, unusual, erratic, or seemingly manic or psychotic behavior is actually happening, or if it is a function of an altered state. The first step is to **trust your instinct** that something is happening which is extreme, out of character, and possibly out of control. Sometimes what the person needs is contact and grounding. If this is not sufficient, assess if it is an emergency and proceed accordingly.

B. Addictions and Self-Injurious Behaviors

Examples include: **drug abuse, alcoholism, self-cutting or any self-mutilation.** Assess if this is an emergency and proceed accordingly.

C. Sexual or Physical Abuse

If someone discloses to you that a spouse or partner is being physically or sexually abusive, encourage that person to contact a local shelter for domestic abuse. If someone discloses to you that he or she is physically or sexually abusing a spouse or partner, or children, or elders 🚒 contact the local police.

